

Aquarium Notes and News

FEBRUARY, 1915



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PHILADELPHIA**

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THE Aquarium Society of Philadelphia meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month, except July and August, at 1414 Arch Street. Initiation fee, \$1.00; dues, \$1.80 per year.

Corresponding membership, \$1.00; no initiation.

"Notes and News" is sent to all members.

We have no subscription list and no paid advertisements, but members may use these columns, subject to editorial approval, to tell what they want to buy or sell.

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FEBRUARY MEETING

The regular business meeting will be held on Wednesday evening, February 24th, at 8.30.

In addition to the regular order of business, there will be an exhibition and competition of Comets, Nymphs and Single-Tail Telescopes of all ages. Also competition for the Peters Cup. See notice elsewhere in this pamphlet.

AQUARIUM NOTES & NEWS

JANUARY EXHIBITION

The competition for January was for Fringetails over one year, and at this meeting we awarded our ribbons by the point system for the first time, and we were highly successful, insomuch as it was demonstrated that our standards were not set too high.

Mr. James Kerr won a Blue Ribbon for the Scaleless Calico Broadtail Jap, his fish scoring 85 points.

There were no other awards in this class.

In the Scaled Broadtail Japs there was no award of Blue Ribbons, as no fish qualified for this ribbon.

The Red Ribbon was awarded Mr. Franklin Barrett, his fish securing 80 points.

The White Ribbon was awarded to Mr. George Smith, his fish scoring 76.33 points.

Awarding ribbons by the point system is a great step in the right direction, because it means that in the future, when any member says he has a fish which was awarded a Blue Ribbon from the Aquarium Society of Philadelphia, it will mean that the fish is at least 85 per cent. perfect. In the past, when a person said they had a Blue Ribbon fish, it really meant no more than to say they really had a goldfish, because a fish that was worth only 50 per cent. value in competition, without any better ones being shown, would have qualified to receive a Blue Ribbon; but this condition is past, and we are happy to say that the ribbons that will be awarded hereafter from our Society will be worth while for our members to strive to attain.

PETERS CUP FOR NOVICES

Some time ago our fellow-member, Mr. Harry Peters, offered a cup for novices, but through some misunderstanding the competition was not well attended, and by unanimous agreement of those

who exhibited their fish and members of the Aquarium Society present, it was decided to hold another competition for this cup, and accordingly the Board of Directors have set aside the meeting of February, our next meeting, for competition for this cup. It is open to all members who have not previously won a prize in competition.

We earnestly urge our members to bring out their fish and make February a banner month, for the competition is open for a number of varieties, and the fact of the Peter's Cup being in competition, we should have an elegant display. Try to be on hand, and bring your friends, as our meetings are open to all who wish to attend.

We are sorry that it is necessary to disappoint our members in regard to furnishing them, with this issue, the charts for the standard of gold fish, but the amount of detail that is necessary to get these charts in meritorious condition is so great that we are compelled to defer their publishing to a later date.

THE "WATER TIGER"

By far the most destructive enemy of young fish is the "water tiger" larva. The illustration shows a



fully developed specimen, but it is really the smaller ones, say a half inch long, which do the most damage, because in that size they are more difficult to detect. They are spindle-shaped, have a flat head equipped with a pair of strong pincers, and swim freely through the water. They attack large or small fish, and one of them is liable to destroy several hundred fry in a few hours. In feeding daphnia to fish, great care should be taken to guard against the introduction of these pests if possible, although in spite of every precaution they will sometimes get in, as they are extremely small when young.

THE WORLD'S FAIR FISH

It may seem heartless to destroy the illusions concerning the so-called "World's Fair Goldfish" mentioned in connection with my name under the caption of "Our Medal," in January NOTES AND NEWS, especially as it appears to have become a historical piscatorial celebrity, a sort of exalted standard of its kind. It was once heralded as "The five-thousand-dollar goldfish" in a full-page article illustrated in color in a Philadelphia Sunday newspaper. I have also heard its cost estimated at hundreds of dollars, as well as many other exaggerations concerning it.

Insomuch as the history of the fish was of sufficient importance to inspire misrepresentations, the real facts concerning it should be at least of equal interest.

The facts are briefly as follows: The Wisconsin Fish Commission bought two hundred imported Japanese Fantail Goldfish for their exhibit at the Columbian Exposition. Unfortunately, these were infected by the disease commonly known as "tail-rot," "fin-rot," etc., and died off very rapidly. When all were dead but seven they were given to me to experiment with by James Nevin, Superintendent of the Wisconsin Commission. This was before the opening of the Exposition. I succeeded in saving three or four of them, which I brought to Philadelphia. Two of them, a male and a female, one the pure pearl fish subsequently exploited as the "World's Fair Fish," and pictured as red in color, were sold to a Philadelphia fancier for fifteen dollars; but this fish at that time had not attained anything like the later development of its fins. In fact, at that time it was not better than thousands of others that are imported every year and sold at low prices. It was not exhibited at the World's Fair, and would only have attracted attention as one of a tankful if they had lived.

At that period of its development the apex or dorsal ridge of its tail slanted upward at an angle of about 45 degrees, and, altogether, it was a particularly symmetrical and promising type of fish.

At that time these fish cost thirteen dollars per

hundred at San Francisco, so that this particular fish began its career in the United States with a value of thirteen cents, finally attaining a mythical newspaper value of five thousand dollars. It might as well have been ten or twenty-five thousand. I have photographs of fish of the long-bodied type, with fins even longer than those of the "World's Fair Fish," that were bred from the stock brought from Japan for Admiral Ammen about 1878.

The Japanese exhibit contained no specimens except a few large and inferior type specimens in alcohol. Some live ones, intended as a present to the United States Fish Commission, died on the ocean.

It is all a matter of small importance, but is interesting as an example of the unscientific attitude that promotes and fosters the birth and growth of myths and traditions.

W. P. SEAL.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE FUNDAMENTAL BASIS OR STANDARD OF MERIT IN JUDGING AN AQUARIUM

(This expression of opinion on the subject was written in response to a request by the editor of NOTES AND NEWS.)

In the earlier English books on the aquarium the ground was taken that the term aquarium could only properly be applied to such an adjustment of the relations between the plant and animal life therein as to make it self-sustaining; that the vessel used should be termed an aquarium tank, and when operated by any artificial device by which æration or change of water is effected, it should be termed a fish tank. It is not certain that this view is still upheld over there, but it does not seem ever to have been accepted in this country. But until recently there has never been any association of fanciers who might consider it. In support of the idea we have fish globes, bell glasses or tanks, battery jars, etc., which are not termed aquaria until they are stocked. It is a question that has many viewpoints and is open to discussion. It is not strictly pertinent to the

subject of this paper and is introduced simply to illustrate the necessity or desirability for exact definition in establishing standards.

The question of how an aquarium should be judged is an important one, inasmuch as it involves both scientific value and fairness to the individual. Undoubtedly, the aquarium, which depends solely on the mutual adjustment of the relations between the plant and animal life, has the highest scientific value and should receive the highest consideration and commendation. The highest standard should be the closest approximation to nature and the absence of artificiality.

In the first place, the aquarium tank should be judged separately as a purely mechanical production, entirely apart from its contents. Its surroundings should not be considered as a setting to give it artistic value. It is, perhaps, unfortunate that we are not all equally endowed with the possession of the necessary accessories for producing external artistic effects, but it would be manifestly undemocratic and unjust that the aquarium of the poor man should not receive its meed because of the grander surroundings of one more fortunate. No picture is judged by its frame. It has the same value on the easel, frameless, in the studio of the artist, as amid splendid surroundings in the gallery of a king. No piece of sculpture gains in value because of the place it occupies. It is the sculpture that gives fame to its repository.

The internal arrangement of an aquarium should approximate nature as nearly as possible, and should be judged on its merits in this respect. Everything that would be unnatural or incongruous should be avoided.

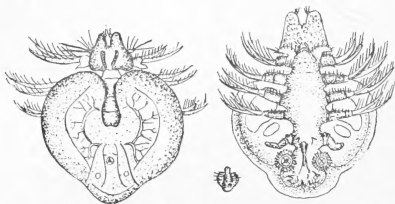
Terra cotta ornaments are an abomination. Sea shells and corals have no rightful place in the fresh water aquarium. Plants not strictly aquatic, placed in the aquarium for temporary effect, should be barred. Everything that is incongruous in its effect is inartistic.

A study of plants in a natural condition will show no evidences of the cleansing processes so evident in the average aquarium, where even the microscopic plants are considered obnoxious and

unsightly, and the pebbles and stones are periodically boiled and scoured. In nature plants will not be found associated with gravel and rocks. These mean rapid currents, which wash away all sedimentary deposit, the food of the plants, and cause such a continual shifting that few plants will grow under such conditions and these do not thrive in the quiet waters of the aquarium. Only sand and sedimentary deposit will be found in the quieter waters where plant life abounds. Of course, on the shores of tidal waters and even of ponds there will be found bare spots where gravel and stones will show, and in the aquarium such arrangement would be effective. But what is particularly to be avoided is any attempt to arrange plants in symmetrical order as a garden or orchard would be planted. The endeavor should be to imitate the careless and graceful profusion of nature.

To get the best results in the operation of an aquarium proper conditions of light and temperature are required, and after that, time is an important factor. It may require weeks and even months to get an aquarium into an ideal condition. When a properly conditioned aquarium assumes the crystal clearness, and develops a growth of algæ, approximating that of an old spring, in addition to a luxuriant growth of the larger plants, it will have attained an ideal condition.

W. P. SEAL.



One of the most difficult fish enemies to combat is the "fish louse," of which the above shows enlarged ventral and dorsal views. The figure in center shows natural size. They fasten themselves firmly on the body or fins of the fish and gradually suck the life fluids from their unwilling host. Being nearly transparent, they are difficult to see, and can only be removed by picking off, since any chemical strong enough to kill them will also kill the fish.

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